

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI TRENTO
Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia

QUADERNI 7

Conflict in Communities.
Forward-looking Memories
in Classical Athens

edited by Elena Franchi and Giorgia Proietti



Trento 2017

Quaderni

7



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Il presente volume è stato sottoposto a procedimento di *peer review*.

Collana Quaderni n. 7

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Segreteria di redazione: Lia Coen

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Via Tommaso Gar 14 - 38122 TRENTO

Tel. 0461-281777 Fax 0461 281751

<http://www.lettere.unitn.it/222/collana-quaderni>

e-mail: editoria@lett.unitn.it

ISBN 978-88-8443-771-6

Finito di stampare nel mese di dicembre 2017

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	7
<i>Introduction</i> by Elena Franchi, Giorgia Proietti	9
JAN ZACHARIAS VAN ROOKHUIJZEN, Where Aglauros Once Fell Down. The Memory Landscape of the Persian Siege of the Acropolis	27
GIORGIA PROIETTI, Fare i conti con la guerra. Forme del discorso civico ad Atene nel V secolo (con uno sguardo all'età contemporanea)	69
BERND STEINBOCK, The Contested Memory of Nicias after the Sicilian Expedition	109
MIRKO CANEVARO, La memoria, gli oratori e il pubblico nell'Atene del IV secolo a.C.	171
MATTEO BARBATO, Using the Past to Shape the Future: Ancestors, Institutions and Ideology in Aeschin. 2.74-78	213
ELENA FRANCHI, La pace di Filocrate e l'enigma della clausola focidese	255
<i>Contributors</i>	289
<i>Index of Ancient Sources</i>	293
<i>General Index</i>	299

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As our two previous volumes of the same series (*Forme della memoria e dinamiche identitarie nell'antichità greco-romana*, 2012, and *Guerra e memoria*, 2014), this book originated in the intellectually stimulating environment of the LabSA (Laboratorio di Storia Antica) at the University of Trento. Since 2010, this research group has provided a forum for young and established Greek and Roman historians to engage continuously with each other's ideas on several topics of common interest. Lately our discussions have focused not only on the relationship between the memory of the past and present needs, which was at the core of the two preceding volumes, but also on the relations of the past with future perspectives and expectations, while the *milieu* where social memories were contested and the aftermath of such conflicts are still very much at the centre of our endeavour.

All the essays collected in this volume deal with Classical Athens. According to the philological approach which is staunchly pursued in the scholarly environment of the LabSA, literary, epigraphic and archaeological evidence is both the starting point and the focus of each chapter. At the same time, documents are examined anew by combining this evidence-based approach with the theoretical and methodological engagement with the social sciences that characterizes the scientific approach of our research group. The essays featured in this volume explore different aspects of the relationship between the past and the future which can be variously traced within the

Athenian civic community in a context of conflict and/or its aftermath. By combining a traditional focus on the ancient evidence with a memory studies approach, all of the contributors try to answer the same question: how were collective memories of the past influenced by present needs and future perspectives and expectations? And how does a specific image of the past in turn influence its future receptions and uses? While not aimed at a comprehensive treatment, this volume strives to show the way towards further investigation of this intriguing subject through a series of case studies.

We would like to thank the staff of the Department of Humanities for their technical and administrative assistance, as well as the editorial committee of the series 'Quaderni', especially its director Prof. Andrea Giorgi, for having this volume positively assessed and accepting it for publication, and Lia Cosen for her editorial assistance. Last but not least, our warmest thank goes to our 'Maestro', Prof. Maurizio Giangliulo, for his constant support and valuable pieces of advice.

Elena Franchi
Giorgia Proietti

ELENA FRANCHI - GIORGIA PROIETTI

INTRODUCTION*

1. *Remembering the Past, with an Eye to the Future: War Memorials, Inscriptions, and the Monumental Landscape*

That the future represents an important component of the Greeks' concept of *temporality* – viewed, according to its use in the social sciences, as the social conception and organization of time – emerges from several hints. The ancient Greeks turned to a variety of means to know the future, from astrology to oneiromancy, from ornithomancy to hieromancy, from dreams to oracles. Rites performed for the war dead – a social practice which had a striking importance in the Greek world – did not only represent an act of commemoration, but also an action for the future, meant to assuage the souls of the deceased. The same holds for the sacrifices dedicated to heroes and gods, which had the goal to achieve their future benevolence. The concern for the *post-mortem* fate of the dead is widely documented, as it gave rise to a variety of eschatological images and concepts. War memorials, political monuments, inscriptions, honorific decrees, public speeches such as the *logoi epitaphioi*, evoking the memory of the past, clearly conveyed messages which spoke to the future visitor, reader or listener.¹ There are even cases where

* Section 1 was written by Giorgia Proietti, section 2 by Elena Franchi. We wish to thank Bernd Steinbock for his valuable comments.

the evocation of the past admittedly played a prominent role of *exemplum* for the future, while its commemorative function was only secondary: one could think for instance of the statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, in the Athenian agora, which conveyed a specific anti-tyrannic message to the Athenian citizen who was going to express his vote at the *ostrakophoria*.² Last but not least, the primary function of poetry, and certainly Herodotus' historiography, was the *kleos aphthiton*, the immortal fame of past actions, that were meant to reach an endless future.

Despite its omnipresence in the ancient evidence for the Greeks' conception of time, the future has never been investigated *per se* by modern scholarship, who has actually been focused in the last couple of decades on the investigation of the past, or on how the Greeks perceived, remembered and constructed their past. A quick glance to modern literature dealing with the Greeks' temporality, from Momigliano's contribution in the 60s to Rosen's and Clarke's more recent studies, will reveal a clear displacement of the future in favour of the past: in other terms, to investigate the Greeks' relation with time has traditionally meant to analyse their conception of the past.³

It was in the middle of my own investigation of this hotly debated topic, i.e. how the Greeks dealt with their past, that I realized that the sphere of the future is consistently underestimated: in front of the – now widespread – awareness

¹ It will suffice to recall the use of *ποτέ* in the inscriptions accompanying tombs and *war memorials*, which explicitly prefigures the future reception setting(s) of the text: see Wade-Gery 1933 (“when the monuments were erected, the events had already fallen into perspective”, 73; “to the long futurity of readers, *ποτέ* will qualify the whole story [...]: for the poet, it must refer to things which, at the moment at which he writes, have definitely receded into the past”, 76-77).

² Di Cesare 2014, 1064.

³ Momigliano 1982 [1966]; Rosen 2004; Clarke 2008.

of the reconstructive nature of social memory,⁴ it must in fact be noted that while the connection between the reconstruction of the past and present needs has been deeply investigated, the link between past events and future goals, perspectives and expectations has only rarely been examined.⁵ The scarce attention paid to the future has seemed to me a missed opportunity to comprehensively understand several aspects that characterized the Greeks' attitude towards history. To take the Greeks' attitude towards the future into account allows in fact to grab new colours and nuances concerning several social practices in the Greek world, especially regarding wars and conflicts in general, which were the privileged subject of public discourse, inscriptions, monuments, and historiographical narratives.⁶

⁴ The social and reconstructive character of memory and its intrinsic connection with the present are the core key of the theoretical and methodological change in paradigm that originated from the engagement of historical research with the social sciences, from the so called sociology of memory to the anthropology of oral tradition: cf. most recently Giangiulio 2007; 2010; Proietti 2012a; 2012b; Franchi 2014.

⁵ An exception which is worth mentioning is the thread of research which, starting from a literary approach, examines Greek historiography through the combination between narratological models and Koselleck's historical semantics, especially the concept of *vergangene Zukunft*, or 'futures past' (Koselleck 2004 [1979]). See Grethlein 2013; 2014; 2016, and generally the essays collected in Lianeri 2016a: apart from Grethlein 2016, the introduction by the editor (Lianeri 2016b) and the essay by Greenwood (Greenwood 2016) are particularly notable. See also Dorati 2017, which, though focused on Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, appears to be of general interest concerning the topic of the 'finestre sul futuro'. On the socio-anthropological side of historical research, a notable exception to the lack of interest concerning the future is Luraghi 2010, which specifically engages with the interaction between memory, present needs and future goals, in relation with honorific practice, a social custom of great importance in Greek life, as well as Lambert 2010, concerning the "paideutic engagement with the past" (p. 236), which characterized monumental epigraphy, especially that on the Acropolis, in Lycourgan Athens.

⁶ On the link between war and memory, and the multiplicity of historical, socio-anthropological, psychological, and identity-related dynamics originated from conflicts see Franchi-Proietti 2014, with a wide bibliography.

This volume, therefore, strives to bring to the fore a perspective which is undeniably present in Greek social practices, especially regarding war and its aftermath: far from being displaced in favour of the past, the ancient Greeks always kept an eye wide open towards the future. The obsession with memory and its frailty, which Ryszard Kapuściński (rightly!) ascribes to Herodotus and his generation,⁷ are nothing else than the expression of their need to look at the same time back to the past, and far, forth to the future.

The first three essays (Rookhuijzen, Proietti, Steinbock) deal mainly with monuments and inscriptions, and the corresponding public discourse. In the wake of the wide attention that has recently been paid to the relationship between memory and space in the ancient world,⁸ they all show how the epigraphic and monumental landscape, and the corresponding cognitive topography, can be described as the result of a dynamic interplay between the memory of the past and future perspectives and expectations.⁹

Rookhuijzen's essay examines through the filter of memory Herodotus' topography of the Persian sack of the Acropolis in 480: he argues that it cannot be considered as an accurate description of the event, but is instead the result of a process of *topo-poiesis* which occurred at the level of oral tradition, folklore, and collective imagery. The social memory underlying Herodotus' account had in fact connected Xerxes' invasion to four places in or around the Acropolis, which already were famous landmarks and had specific mythological connections

⁷ Kapuściński 2005, 76-77.

⁸ See e.g. Alcock 2002; Ma 2009.

⁹ The perspective adopted in Luraghi 2010, focusing on the 'demos as narrator' in the Athenian *megistai timai* starting from the end of the 4th century BC, is analogous: before reminding the actions and qualities of the honorand, "the monumentalised text of a decree could (also) serve to stabilise for the future the memory of events – or rather, the demos' version thereof" (Luraghi 2010, 257). For the concept of cognitive topography see Zerubavel 1997; 2003.